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C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 000893

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W DANA BANKS, INL/AAE, AF/RSA, ACCRA FOR
NORWOOD AND VANG, LAGOS FOR DEA ATTACHE, NAVEUR FOR LCDR
CNE-C6F DAVID MORALES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2017

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [MASS](#) [PINR](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN'S INTERIOR MINISTER PRESSES FOR USG AID TO
TRAIN POLICE AND SHARE INTEL ON ANTI-TERRORISM AND DRUG
TRAFFICKING

REF: A. COTONOU 768
[B](#). COTONOU 648
[C](#). COTONOU 494

Classified By: Amb. Gayleatha B. Brown for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

1.(C) Summary. Major General Felix Hessou, the GOB's newly appointed Interior Minister (Ref C), requested U.S. assistance in training and equipping Benin's police force in the fight against the illegal narcotics trade and terrorism. Hessou also requested the U.S. share any intelligence it has concerning suspicious vessels operating in Benin's waters. The Ambassador reiterated that stopping the flow of illegal drugs and combating terrorism are important priorities of the USG and that Post would explore ways for further cooperation between the GOB and the USG in these areas. End Summary.

2.(U) The Ambassador met with Felix Hessou, the GOB's Minister of Interior and a former Beninese Armed Forces (BAF) Chief of Staff, at his request on November 20. He wants U.S. assistance in training and reforming Benin's national police force. Hessou was proud of the work he had done at the Ministry of Defense to support U.S. - Benin military relations from ACRI to ACOTA and stated he knew that much of the improvement in BAF's peacekeeping abilities was the result of American assistance. Hessou now asks for assistance in training the Beninese police force in illegal drug interdiction both on land and at sea. Hessou also asked for assistance in Benin's efforts to increase the security of its civil documents in an effort to prevent the issuance of passports to unqualified individuals. He stated it was not uncommon for individuals from Burundi, Togo, Chad and Nigeria to illegitimately acquire Beninese passports.

3.(C) Hessou stated he "knew" the American navy had the capacity to track all the ships in Benin's coastal waters. He specifically asked the USG to provide the GOB with information on any suspicious activities it noticed in Benin's waters. Note: The French government and the GOB continue to work on installing an Automatic Identification System (AIS) in Cotonou. An AIS will allow the GOB to know if unauthorized vessels are in the waters off of Cotonou. Post awaits a response on its request for 1206 funding to augment Benin's AIS system to provide coverage of the entire coast and purchase fast patrol boats for Benin's Navy (Ref A). End Note.

4.(U) Comment: Hessou, from his time as a military officer,

clearly understands the capacity of American training to improve a unit's operation. The Beninese police force is in need of help. It lacks the capacity to investigate serious crimes including illegal narcotics smuggling, terrorist financing, and money laundering. It is currently wracked by turmoil following revelations of police involvement in the disappearance of several kilograms of cocaine after a drug running vessel ran aground off of Ouidah (Ref B). These revelations led to the sacking and arrest of the national police chief and several of his subordinates. Hessou wants U.S. assistance to improve his force. Improving Benin's police force will enable Benin to begin to fight the flow of illegal narcotics and assist it as it works on the front lines to combat child-trafficking and stop money laundering. Post will begin collaborating, with its domestic and overseas colleagues, on a plan to assist the GOB in training its police force. End Comment.

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